



March 26, 2019

To The Members of the United States House of Representatives:

On behalf of the National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA), I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 7) **and to oppose any motions to recommit and any harmful amendments** when the bill is brought to a vote on the House floor.

NELA advances employee rights and serves lawyers who advocate for equality and justice in the American workplace. NELA provides training and support to lawyers in protecting the rights of employees who are at a great disadvantage in any employment dispute because of the virtually unlimited resources of their employers. With members in every state, NELA is the country's largest professional organization exclusively comprised of lawyers who represent individual employees in employment discrimination cases and other employment-related matters. NELA and its 69 state and local affiliates have more than 4,000 members across our nation. Our members are private civil rights lawyers specializing in employment matters who regularly confront the practical realities of illegal pay discrimination. They know that in the current economic climate it is more important than ever that *no* worker be shortchanged.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is a long overdue remedial measure that addresses long-recognized inadequacies of the 1963 Equal Pay Act. The Equal Pay Act made it illegal for employers to pay unequal wages to male and female employees who perform the same work. However, today, wage disparities between men and women persist in both the private and public sectors, at every educational level, across the country. Women working full time are paid, on average, only 80 cents for every dollar paid to men. This gap is significantly greater for women of color.

Equal pay for equal work is an issue of economic security and fundamental fairness. The Paycheck Fairness Act would update and strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 to provide more effective protection against sex-based pay discrimination. The bill provides specific, targeted remedies that would update and fix gaps in the 1963 Equal Pay Act. It places the burden on employers to show that wage gaps between men and women doing the same work can be explained and supported on the basis of factors unrelated to gender. It prohibits employers' use of prior salary history in setting pay for new employees and in so doing addresses the manner in which our system perpetuates this unjust form of discrimination.

Importantly, the Paycheck Fairness Act brings Equal Pay Act remedies and class action procedures into alignment with such remedies and procedures available for other civil rights claims. In recognition of the systemic nature of this form of discrimination, the bill strengthens the government's ability to identify and address systematic wage discrimination by requiring employers to report pay data to the EEOC. When women endure pay discrimination, their children, their entire families, and our communities suffer.

We urge you to support final passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 7), and to oppose any motions to recommit and any amendment that would weaken this important and long overdue legislation.

Sincerely,

Terry O'Neill  
Executive Director